

18.49 Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Forests of the Amazon

RECOGNIZING that Amazonia contains 70 per cent of all the world's tropical moist forests and that these forests have immense value for all mankind in contributing to global climatic stability and as a rich heritage of biological diversity;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the sovereignty of the Amazonian countries over their natural resources, but also their global responsibility to use these resources rationally, as well as the corresponding responsibility of other nations, principally the developed ones, in helping them achieve this;

CONCERNED that much of the attention generated outside South America, particularly in the media of the industrialized world, is not based on a full understanding of the social and ecological issues in the region;

NOTING WITH ALARM the recent increase in the rate of clearance of Amazonian forests and particularly the extensive fires that have occurred in forests disturbed by road-building, logging, colonization and clearance for agriculture; and that the expansion of these activities is creating fire risks in areas not normally exposed to this threat;

CONCERNED that fires in the Amazon are contributing to the present increase in levels of carbon dioxide, thereby exacerbating the greenhouse effect and accelerating global warming, with potential local, regional and global impacts;

FURTHER AWARE that forest destruction may result in a reduction in rainfall within Amazonia and that this may have repercussions on global air circulation systems, and thus on the climate of other parts of the world;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

1. REQUESTS the Director General to bring the following considerations and recommendations to the attention of those to whom they are respectively addressed:

A. Environmentally Sound Development

CONSCIOUS of the fact that the Amazon region is inherently fragile but at the same time may contain

valuable resources of soil, forests, savannas, water and minerals, and that a careful and sustainable development of these resources could alleviate poverty, thus reducing the need for destructive exploitation of natural areas that must be conserved;

RECALLING that it is essential that such development should be ecologically sustainable, and also consistent with the needs, aspirations and cultural sensitivities of the people already living in Amazonia;

AWARE that the current unequal distribution and/or shortage of fertile land and the lack of opportunities outside the Amazon basin compel people to move to Amazonia to seek agricultural land, and that these people are driven to clear forests generally on marginal lands for crops or grazing and often in the knowledge that farming will not be sustainable;

FURTHER AWARE that although birth rates are declining in most Amazon countries, population is still increasing rapidly, in particular by migration into the region, resulting in changing and often destructive consumptive patterns and heavy demands on natural resources;

AWARE that all the countries of the region have specialized institutions dealing with Amazonian ecology and land-use, and that these are staffed by professional agronomists, foresters and ecologists, but that this pool of expertise has often been overlooked in international debate on Amazonia, and that even within the region itself, there has been a persistent failure to take sufficient account of the knowledge and concerns of local specialists;

CONCERNED that past policies have not adequately recognized the value of the Amazon forests and that in particular:

- a. colonization and conversion for other uses such as cattle ranching and agriculture have been encouraged in some countries, through the establishment of infrastructure, the provision of tax incentives and the attribution of title to land which is only under nominal management, and that this has frequently resulted in large areas of forest being cleared or degraded, and subsequently abandoned or put to marginal use;
- b. the exploitation of Amazonia's oil, mineral and hydroelectric resources is often carried out in ways which do not recognize the ecological fragility of the zones to be exploited, creating serious pollution problems and ignoring the rights of the indigenous populations of those regions, while the infrastructure associated with these activities has facilitated the penetration of more settlers often in remote areas, leading to destructive and non-sustainable settlement patterns;
- c. in some countries there are still plans which incline towards major infrastructure establishment, as well as the opening up of vast new areas of Amazon forest for settlement;

The General Assembly:

2. AFFIRMS ITS CONVICTION that most of the land area of the Amazon is extremely marginal for any conventional form of agriculture and that the majority would be better retained under natural forest;
3. STRONGLY RECOMMENDS that land-use in Amazonia take into account the ecological constraints operating in the region and that natural forest only be cleared as part of carefully planned development programmes and when subsequent uses are known to be sustainable and of greater economic and social benefit to present and future generations;

4. URGES the governments of the region to give priority to the adoption of more productive and sustainable land-use technologies in areas already cleared and under development, and to stop planned or spontaneous colonization or settlement in new and remote areas;
5. WELCOMES the decisions by some governments in the region that no new livestock tax credit financing projects will be approved and that all existing fiscal incentives will be phased out in the near future;
6. URGES that plans for further infrastructural development should evolve within broad land development strategies, taking due account of the native knowledge of the rational use of the Amazon forest, rather than being planned independently of environmental considerations;
7. STRESSES that there is considerable scope for the development of agroforestry in which tree crops are combined with agricultural crops, thus maintaining soil nutrient levels, but that greatly expanded programmes of research and extension are needed to realize the potential of such systems and that this will require additional funding at both a national and international level;
8. RECOMMENDS that settlement of Amazonia should not be motivated by land shortages outside the region, and that instead priority should be given to achieving equitable and efficient use of land in these areas;

B. The Role of the Timber Industry

CONCERNED that although the highly diverse Amazon forest contains many species with high density timber which are therefore difficult to harvest, process and market, so that consequently Amazonian timbers are not at present in great demand for the international timber trade, as tropical forests in other parts of the world become commercially exhausted, the attention of the timber trade will turn to the Amazon forests;

RECOGNIZING MOREOVER that there are considerable resources of high value timber species and that providing it is possible to prevent agricultural

colonization of the forests after logging, sustained yield forestry would be an appropriate use for relatively large areas of Amazonia;

FURTHER AWARE that there are numerous non-timber products which can be sustainably harvested from natural forest, that in some cases these produce revenues greater than those to be obtained from logging, and that harvesting these products creates employment and income for local communities;

The General Assembly:

9. URGES countries of the region to greatly expand their programmes to develop and market non-timber products by establishing extractive reserves that operate on a sustainable basis and by creating fiscal and land tenure incentives towards this goal;
10. URGES the timber industry, in consultation with the governments concerned, to draw up guide lines and regulations for the sustainable extraction of timber from those forests that have the potential to yield such products;

C. Conservation of Biological Diversity

AWARE of the outstanding biological diversity within the tropical moist forests of the Amazon region;

NOTING WITH APPROVAL the conclusions of the workshop on priority areas for conservation in Amazonia, held in Manaus, Brazil, in January 1990 and the efforts of the FAO protected area planning and training activities in the region;

The General Assembly:

11. CALLS UPON the countries of the region vigorously to pursue and enhance their efforts to conserve the full range of animal and plant species occurring on their territories, and to allocate areas to nature conservation that are large enough to encompass populations of those species of animals and plants that characteristically occur at very low densities, or which disperse over very wide areas, ensuring that their protected areas are distributed so as to cover all the major ecosystems and sites of high biological diversity or endemism;

D. Needs and Rights of Indigenous Communities

RECALLING that economic activities dating back to colonial times and agricultural colonization in conjunction with a present lack of clear government policies have endangered the cultural and physical survival of many native groups in Amazonia;

ACKNOWLEDGING that progress, although insufficient, is being made on this issue in several countries of the region;

The General Assembly:

12. URGES the governments concerned to pay particular attention to the rights and needs of indigenous and local peoples and to do their utmost to safeguard the ethnic diversity of the peoples in the Amazon as part of the cultural riches of the Amazonian countries;

E. The Role of Development Assistance Agencies

RECOGNIZING the need for the international community to help Amazon basin countries to preserve and achieve sustainable use of the Amazon's forests, especially by

supporting scientific and social research institutions, particularly those engaged in research into forest management programmes, agroforestry and the development and marketing of non-timber forest products;

The General Assembly:

13. URGES governments and international funding agencies to use fiscal incentives and innovative funding mechanisms to support protected area programmes, agroforestry, sustained yield production of timber and non-timber products from natural forests, and sustainable management of the varzea floodplains including agriculture, fisheries and forestry;

F. The Role of IUCN in Amazonia

NOTING WITH APPRECIATION the success of the consultation with IUCN members in South America, held at Quito, Ecuador, in April 1990, and the opportunities for strengthening the Union's presence and contribution on that continent;

WELCOMING the proposed programmes for the South American region set out in the draft IUCN Programme for 1991-1993 (General Assembly Paper GA/18/90/11);

The General Assembly:

14. URGES the Director General, within available resources, to strengthen collaboration between the Secretariat of IUCN and its members and other concerned institutions and individuals in the region, particularly by:
 - a. cooperating with appropriate national and regional institutions in the preparation and implementation of conservation strategies for the Amazonian regions of each of the countries concerned;
 - b. seeking technical and financial backing for the implementation of these national and regional conservation strategies;
 - c. assisting the Commission network and members in the exchange of information on

conservation issues within the region, so promoting cooperation in the implementation of conservation strategies and programmes and building consensus on critical conservation issues;

- d. assisting with the compilation of inventories of living natural resources and in the preparation of plans for the conservation of animal and plant life;
- e. supporting pilot projects to establish communal and extractive reserves which will contribute to developing new approaches to the management of the Amazon forests and to the reconciliation of the needs of local communities with the requirements of biological diversity conservation;
- f. assisting IUCN governmental and non-governmental members in monitoring national policies concerning the Amazon and particularly the implementation of the Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation, its Special Commission on the Environment and other relevant Protocols and Decisions;
- g. providing any assistance that may be required to develop sound legal and institutional mechanisms to deal with environmental problems both nationally and regionally;
- h. promoting studies and activities which favour increasing the extent of protected areas in the Amazon, including those adjacent to frontiers;
- i. providing specialized expertise for the conduct of studies of the environmental impacts of major development projects in the Amazon;
- j. generally contributing to the building of national and regional capacity to achieve conservation and sustainable use of the living natural resources of the Amazon.